

STATINTL

# Jessica Mitford's Publisher Decries Attack on Her Politics

By RALPH BLUMENFELD

The publisher of Jessica Mitford's bestseller about funerals—"The American Way of Death"—rallied to the author's defense today after a California Congressman called her a pro-Communist.

Rep. James B. Utt (R-Calif.) placed a statement in the Congressional Record charging that the book's profit will "no doubt find their way into the coffers of the Communist Party, U.S.A."

Listing what he said were the "Communist-front activities" of Miss Mitford and her Hungarian-born husband, Robert Treuhart, Rep. Utt said the book strikes "another blow at the Christian religion."

Simon and Schuster, the publisher, said booksellers have received letters accusing them of fostering the Communist line by selling the book—a study of overcommercialization in the undertaking industry.

## Publisher's Rebuttal

In a statement the publisher called this a "desperate attempt" by the industry to discredit the book—and "combat reader approval—by attacking Miss Mitford personally."

"We feel we should point out," the statement added, "that 'The American Way of Death' is completely non-political, that the author's politics, whatever they may be, are her own business, and in any case have nothing to do with the subject of the book."

Simon and Schuster printed 100,000 copies of the book within weeks of the original publication, it said, and is preparing a paperback edition of 500,000 copies.

As a protest against extravagance in funerals—and fully attacking the extravagance in embalming and the practices of many morticians—the book evoked immediate criticism from clergymen of all



JESSICA MITFORD  
Author of bestseller

said Miss Mitford was trying to replace U. S. funeral customs with those "practiced in Communist countries such as the Soviet Union."

## Comment From Rome

But a Vatican spokesman, the Most Rev. Sebastiano Baggio, proposed that undertakers make "an agonizing reappraisal not only of price structures but also of pagan customs and traditions that have crept into the

## Industry

Miss Mitford is one of eight daughters—novelist Nancy Mitford is another—of an English lord who sympathized with Hitler. She lives in California with her husband, and Rep. Utt said both had taken the Fifth Amendment three in 1953 when asked about their "associations."

## Speaks Here Wednesday

Utt noted that the author is scheduled to speak at a Waldorf luncheon Wednesday with former CIA chief Allen Dulles and UN Ambassador Stevenson. The writer's office said he has canceled his Waldorf speech because he will be attending a luncheon honoring Yugoslav President Tito instead.

The Congressman also said CBS "insists on giving her one hour free time" on a funeral documentary Wednesday night although CBS has "been on notice for two weeks regarding Jessica Mitford's Communist-front activities."

A CBS spokesman said Rep. Utt had declined an offer to appear on the program with Miss Mitford.

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